

**How Organizational Minorities Form and Use Social Ties:  
Evidence from Teachers in Majority-White and Majority-Black Schools\***

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**Abstract**

This paper draws on 11 months of multi-site ethnographic fieldwork and 103 interviews to investigate how teachers in school faculty of varying racial compositions form and use their social ties to secure professional, political, and emotional resources at work. Findings show that in general, white teachers in the numerical minority in their schools secured all resource types through their same-race ties, while black teachers in the numerical minority secured primarily emotional resources from theirs. Given these observed differences, I show how the form and use of the two minority groups' social ties stem in large part from distinctive organizational practices. In turn, the tie differences can account for differences in social integration and resource access in the organization. The data allow for comparisons to patterns among majority groups.

**Keywords:** organizations; race; coworkers; social networks; social support

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## INTRODUCTION

Social capital in the form of ties to coworkers is critical for accessing the professional, political, and emotional resources necessary for career success (e.g., Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000; Blair-Loy 2001; Castilla, Lan, and Rissing 2013b; Lutter 2015). Research indicates that historically underrepresented minorities have lower access to these resources in settings that continue to be dominated by white men (Kanter 1977; Sloan, Evenson Newhouse, and Thompson 2013; Turco 2010). However, in comparison to societal minority groups who are additionally in the numeric organizational minority (e.g., blacks), less is known about how members of societal majority groups (e.g., whites) fare in workplaces in which they are the numerical minority. The former group can be thought of as double-level minorities and the latter as single-level minorities.

To date, there is some evidence that double-level minorities and single-level minorities face different obstacles to obtaining social capital at work (Sloan et al. 2013). Two different mechanisms drive these two groups' behavioral responses to being in the numerical minority: feeling discriminated against (for blacks) (Stainback and Irvin 2012; Wingfield 2010) and feeling discomfort (for whites) (Tsui, Egan, and O'Reilly 1992; see also Maume and Sebastian 2007; Mueller et al. 1999). By turning to same-race colleagues with similar experiences, blacks in the numerical minority fare better in their promotion outcomes than similar blacks who do not utilize in-group ties (Ibarra 1995). By turning to same-race colleagues, numerical minority whites may mobilize for resource and status advantages and maintain a positive self-identity in an unfamiliar context (Ellemers 1993; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Both groups stand to gain well-being from in-group members, as co-ethnics<sup>1</sup> extend greater empathy and useful advice for coping with shared experiences specific to their group (Thoits 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I use the term “co-ethnic” interchangeably with “same-race.” Race and ethnicity are “mutually reinforcing,” “overlapping symbolic categories” (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009). Participants

My research questions are: how do social ties among white numerical minorities and black numerical minorities compare; if they differ, why; and how do these ties influence numerical minority workers' access to resources in the workplace? I further investigate how tie formation and resource acquisition processes work for majority groups in the same workplaces: whites in a majority-white school (which I call the non-minority condition) and blacks in a majority-black workplace (a different kind of single-level minority condition, in which workers are a majority group at work but a minority group in society). To answer these questions, I studied public high school teachers to compare white and black teachers' work experiences when they were each in the demographic minority or majority in their schools. Teaching is a desirable case study for examining the experiences of racial minorities at work because it is a highly racially segregated occupation across workplace settings (Frankenberg 2009). Moreover, the structure of the teaching profession—i.e., having weak formal socialization, vulnerability to external political pressures, and a relative dearth of extrinsic rewards—make teaching a fertile context in which to study the importance of acquiring professional resources and control informally—i.e., through relationships (Lortie 2002[1975]).

Currently, the organizational demography literature provides explanations for minority experiences based upon representation of groups and intergroup dynamics, but it does not adequately address either organizational arrangements or the supervisor-coworker link. I am taking an organizational embeddedness perspective on the role of context and supervisor practices and incorporating it into organizational demography research. The organizational embeddedness perspective sheds light on how social capital is expanded or reduced through organizational practices distal to the ties themselves (Small 2009a). While my primary aim is to

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themselves used the term ethnicity, but almost always to note the cultural and historical similarities they shared with fellow racial in-group members, not distinctions among them.

strengthen research in organizational demography by importing ideas from organizational embeddedness, I also push the organizational embeddedness perspective a step further. I bring in organizational demographics to consider how organizational practices relate to the discrimination or discomfort experienced by double-level minorities or single-level minorities.

By examining aspects of managerial practice with direct repercussions for the social fabric of school faculty, I uncover how organization-level actions shape the properties of employees' (i.e., teachers') social ties with one another. These social tie properties in turn influence the kinds of resources colleagues access. I find that white and black minority teachers'<sup>2</sup> ties differ in their speed, cliquishness, multiplexity, and expansiveness. These differences subsequently produce resource gaps, based in large part on organizational practices that facilitate greater resource exchange for whites than for blacks. These resource gaps are not due to differences in resources numerical minorities bring into the workplace or the level of resources available in the school. Moreover, when compared to cases of black teachers in the majority, I find that black numerical minority teachers experience an extra penalty in terms of resource access. However, when compared to white teachers in the majority, I find that white numerical minorities do not experience any penalty.

### **Minorities in the Workplace**

Minorities in the workplace have typically been studied through the lens of organizational demography or status.

*Organizational demography.* The organizational demography approach focuses on social dynamics created by demographic composition and how these shape minority groups' social behavior. Simmel's (1950) work is perhaps the earliest to theorize about how simple numeric

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<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, I use the terms "white/black minority" and "white/black numerical minority" interchangeably.

representation of groups in a social setting generates a distinctive structural influence on social interaction among members. Empirical work on composition effects since then has taken two broad approaches to examining minority experiences and outcomes in the workplace. One approach adopts exact thresholds at which minorities are expected to have varying degrees of differential treatment: “minority,” “tilted,” or “balanced” minority groups (Kanter 1977).<sup>3</sup> Kanter (1977) argues that token minorities, representing 15% or less of their workplace demographics, experience the most pronounced performance pressures, out-group exclusion, and constricted role expectations associated with being in the minority. This minority distinctiveness also prompts tokens’ support seeking from and possible competition with co-tokens (Kanter 1977). One update to token theory considers the role of organizational culture to explain why some tokens fare better than others when two minority groups cohabit one workplace (Turco 2010). Another approach to organizational demography does not use exact cut-points, but instead examines the effects of having a simple plurality (i.e., a majority group) on the experiences and outcomes of the minority group. Here, the focus is on general power dynamics, experiences of role conflict, lack of perceived support and belonging, and issues of representation experienced by the minority group (e.g., Mueller et al. 1999; Renzulli, Parrott, and Beattie 2011; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Some studies show how organizational structures’ accompanying demographic compositions play a critical role in shaping how minorities relate to one another. For example, nonwhites’ experiences in predominately white or racially-mixed organizations where they have limited opportunities to connect with one another—due to prohibitive scheduling structures and administrators’ preferences to avoid self-segregation—can reduce information sharing among minorities (Davis and Watson 1982; Tatum 1997).

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<sup>3</sup> According to Kanter, cut-offs for each group are 15% or less for skewed groups with “token minorities;” 16-39% for titled groups with simple “minorities;” and 40-60% for balanced groups with potential subgroups. Importantly, Kanter’s definition of group types is suited for her analysis of gender, not race.

*The Status-based Approach.* A slightly different approach to studying the treatment and behavioral reactions of racial groups does not focus on the immediate organizational context, but rather on the influence of societal-level factors that inform the experience of being a minority member. A clear example of a status-based approach is seen in studies which update Kanter's (1977) numerical approach to token theory. Numbers alone cannot account for cases where organizational token minorities experience interactional advantages, such as male nurses whose higher status working in a female-dominated setting moderates and even reverses negative minority effects (Williams 1992). Related studies focus on a racial group's historical status-based advantages or disadvantages in society, i.e., beyond or prior to entering the organization or a social situation, in shaping their social behavior and attitudes as an average member of their race group (e.g., DiTomaso 2013; Feagin 1991; Higginbotham and Weber 1992; Smith and Moore 2000). The theory of racial domination can be used to explain these advantage differences. This theory describes racism as two-pronged, both institutional and interpersonal. Institutional racism is "informed by centuries of racial domination that withhold from people of color opportunities, privileges, and rights that many whites enjoy" (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009:345); in turn, the meanings and consequences of interpersonal racism are rooted in this institutional context. In other words, these studies assume that racial groups are asymmetric to begin with, irrespective of what experiences they encounter and react to in the workplace. This contrasts with organizational studies which isolate how procedures enshrined in the particular institution themselves produce racial differences and influence race relations (e.g., Flores 2017; Lewis and Diamond 2015).

It would be inaccurate to say that organizational and status-based theoretical approaches to studying demographic minorities take one perspective to the exclusion of the other. Indeed, an open systems perspective (Scott and Davis 2007), which theorizes a permeable wall between

organization and society, synthesizes the two (e.g., McPherson and Smith-Lovin 1987). Rather, the question is which frame takes precedence in the analysis in accounting for minority/majority group differences in social processes and material outcomes. The present study takes an organizational demography perspective, and follows studies which assume that being an organizational minority in the presence of a plurality will generate distinctive experiences in the workplace, vis-à-vis a demographic equivalent who is placed in a workplace in which she is in the plurality. Nevertheless, due to the multiple comparisons enabled by the data, this study highlights the link between demographic organizational minority and status-driven societal minority experiences and partially disentangles their relative contributions to workplace inequality.

### **Social Networks in Organizations**

Just as organizational demography advances the issue of numerical representation for shaping minority experiences, numerical representation is also a critical factor for developing network ties and informing the characteristics of those ties (e.g., Goodreau, Kitts, and Morris 2009). For minorities, the number of in-group (in this study, same-race) others available for support is an opportunity structure for shaping network tie formation. Two perspectives inform our understanding of how organizational minorities build their social networks. First, the classic social capital perspective holds that actors purposively select others to incorporate into their social network, and that individuals' social actions seek to optimize personal gain (Coleman 1986). Second, the organizational embeddedness perspective assumes that organizations broker social ties and shape individual members' social capital through institutional practices (Small 2009a).

*Social Capital in the Workplace.* In research on the structure of social ties (Burt 1992) and resource composition of social ties (Lin 1999), the importance of social relationships for

individual outcomes is well-documented. Networks studies within the sociology of work focus on properties of employees' social ties and networks as predictors of access to social capital—that is, benefits deriving from relationships. Access to resources such as information, learning, influence, and support in turn shape work outcomes such as hiring, performance, tenure, and promotion (Castilla et al. 2013a, 2013b). In their review of the literature on networks and employment, Castilla and colleagues (2013a) offer a mechanisms framework which identifies properties of tie strength, closure, size, and visibility, as differentially able to transfer or signal resources. The tie and network properties most effective for acquiring resources and positive employment outcomes differ for dominant societal majority and subordinate (e.g., historically underrepresented) groups, however. For example, while closed, homogeneous (i.e., same-sex) networks benefit males' access to information and promotion outcomes, these kinds of networks are often disadvantageous for women (Blair-Loy 2001; Lutter 2015; Merluzzi 2017). Marsden (1987) finds that blacks' networks are smaller than whites'; Hedegard (2018) shows these differences are driven by blacks' stronger perceived racial identity, which places limits on with whom they choose to form relationships. Furthermore, for black workers in majority-white work settings, the individual pursuit of promotion can undercut racial group solidarity and increase isolation from their black peers (Collins 1997). Evidence about whether network differences result in racial differences in social support is mixed (see Small 2007 for a review).

From the purposive action perspective of the social capital approach, societal or historical minorities in the organization fare better when they use more effective network strategies for gaining resources – strategies which may differ from those of the societal or historical majority group's (Ibarra 1995). In this theoretical model of social capital gains, the emphasis is placed on individual choice. In contrast, an embeddedness model emphasizes the role of the immediate context.



*Organizational Embeddedness.* Studies of organizations such as childcare centers (Small 2009a), bathhouses (Delgado 1999), restaurants (Duneier 1992), and Army combat brigades (DiBenigno 2017) have shown how seemingly trivial organizational practices have large impacts on social tie formation and resource sharing among their members. Taking primarily an organizational embeddedness perspective, such studies highlight how the context of interaction shapes the emergence and maintenance of supportive network ties more powerfully than demographic composition, neighborhood location, personal motivation and preferences, or the particular service rendered (Small 2009a). For instance, in a multi-site study of childcare centers, Small (2009a) found that center directors, through the procedures they used to run their center, created a context of interaction among mothers that was more explanatory of how mothers secured social support than simply studying a mother's use of her strong ties. Some of these center-specific procedures affected frequency of interaction between mothers, such as child pick-up times being required within a tight time frame or being lax. In the former case, mothers' chance of repeated encounters fostered compartmentalized strong ties – that is, ties strong not due to the emotional closeness of the bond, but strong because of the specific resources and trust available through them. In turn, these centers, often unintentionally, fostered or hindered effective resource support between mothers. Small's (2009a) analysis highlights how the tie property of compartmentalization, which refers to the task-specificity around which the tie is based, impacts resource outcomes. Uncovering another emergent tie property attributable to institutional factors – the property of tie “disposability” – Desmond's ethnographic study (2012) shows how such short-lived ties are directly shaped by organizational environments in which the urban poor meet and form ties, such as welfare offices, food pantries, and job centers.

Another facet of organizational arrangements impacting the likelihood of social contact and interaction is proximity. Often shaped by actions of the manager (e.g., Meyers and Vallas

2016), proximity within an organization increases the likelihood of friendship formation and collaboration (see Spillane, Shirrell, and Sweet 2017 for a review). As Spillane and colleagues demonstrate, the association between spatial configurations in the workplace and social ties arises because interactions that happen due to proximity offer more exposure, while requiring less effort. Reagans (2011) further shows that proximity and demographic similarity combine to produce strong ties.

The present study takes an organizational embeddedness approach to understanding social networks in the workplace and their role in generating workplace inequality. By examining how key features of management practice relate to patterns of observed coworker support, I find that these practices impact the properties of employees' (i.e., teachers') social ties in perhaps unintended ways. I follow Small (2009a), who departs from a purposive action approach, to understand how numerical minorities form and sustain social ties. Purposive action would assume that numerical minority groups use network strategies based solely on their status in broader society. By this reasoning, whites are more assortative in their networks when they are in the minority than black numerical minorities (Goodreau et al. 2009), and black numerical minorities have more racially heterogeneous and fewer intimate network relationships (Ibarra 1995). The drawback to the purposive action approach is that it lacks an explanatory mechanism for significant differences within the minority group. In contrast, the organizational embeddedness approach I use assumes that the setting substantially guides minority relationship-building through non-purposive factors such as how frequently, intensely, or during what activity members can interact (Small 2009a). This approach uncovers relational dynamics as the intervening mechanism producing inequality in resource access, and addresses cases that do not follow the purposive action theoretical framework.

While to date it has not been used in this way, the organizational embeddedness perspective can help us understand demographic outcomes. Organizations, like individuals, identify racially and navigate racial dynamics in their environment (Wooten and Couloute 2017). That organizations carry a racial classification is often evident to the individuals within them (Isapa-Landa and Conwell 2015). Given that race processes occur at this meso-level, below the societal level but higher than the individual level, managers of organizations are in an especially important position. They shape the organizational practices and routines that support not only organizational performance, efficiency, and legitimacy, but also – whether consciously or not – the organization as it navigates its racial environment. Rather than focusing on the mere representation of race groups inside the organization as the explainer of demographic outcomes, examining organizational practices may provide new insights about how racial inequalities are produced in organizations. The mechanism of practices is elevated in organizational embeddedness theory, and should also be in studies of organizational demography.

If organizational practices delineate how organizational members ought to behave and relate to one another, then a good way to understand demographic outcomes among employees is through examining their social networks. While organizational practices provide a mechanism for understanding how organizations shape race relations, network concepts provide a mechanism for understanding resource outcomes which may differ across demographic subgroups.

## METHODS

### Research setting

Because this study compares how organizational minorities form and use their social ties, I strategically selected multiple school sites (n=5) with different faculty compositions.<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms for, demographics of, and important structural attributes of the sites are summarized in Table 1. All schools are in one metropolitan area in the Southeastern United States. Pine Grove and Larksfield High Schools are part of the Davenport School District.<sup>5</sup> They each serve an urban, majority-black (97-99 percent), high-poverty (100 percent eligible for federal free lunch) student population. Crest Point, Surrey Ridge, and Mt. Summit High Schools are part of a neighboring suburban district, Martin School District. These schools vary in student demographics. Crest Point students are about 65 percent black and about 60 percent low-income, while Surrey Ridge and Mt. Summit have majority-white (approximately 70 percent) and affluent student populations.

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The teaching profession offers an ideal case for examining demographic composition effects in the workplace for two reasons. First, racial numerical minority experiences in the profession are common. Nationally, 8.3% of public schools have between 10-15% nonwhite teachers, while 10.06% of schools have a majority-minority faculty racial composition (i.e., 40% or less white teachers) (Hansen and Quintero 2018). The sites selected in this study also fall into these well-represented school demographics. These proportions are underscored further by correspondence of teacher demographics to student demographics. Reflecting national trends,

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<sup>4</sup> I was previously employed as a teacher in one of these schools three years prior to this study. Having contacts in the district facilitated research access. This prior experience influenced my position in the field by providing more contextual background to my data collection at time of study. The school was led by a different principal and had experienced substantial turnover since I worked there.

<sup>5</sup> All names of places and people are pseudonyms.

white teachers in the sample tended to work in schools with majority-white student populations, whereas black teachers tended to concentrate in schools with majority-black student populations (Frankenberg 2009). In this study I am focusing on teachers outside of the typical racial-matching scenario. The white numerical minorities, on average, were new to teaching in general and so did not have prior teaching experience in any type of school. Those who did had spent the previous part of their careers in organizations in which they were the majority. Most of the black numerical minorities, in contrast, had previously taught in a majority-black school and so they had little or no prior experience as a numerical racial minority in their school workplace. Because the two minority groups are both new to the workplace minority experience, we might expect race to have similar salience in guiding their social ties towards their in-group.

Second, contrary to theoretical accounts of teachers' work as being socially isolating (Lortie 2002[1975]), in the schools studied here, a typical teacher workday involved four-and-a-half hours of instruction in the classroom, but the remainder of the workday offered ample opportunity for collegial interaction: two hours of independent planning time, 20 minutes of lunch break, and at least 30 minutes of supervisory duty outside of one's classroom. In addition, teacher meetings often took place before or after the official school day. While the amount of time teachers interacted daily was about the same across all of the schools, the findings show that the degree of choice in who they interacted with varied.

In this study, black numerical minorities represented between 10-15 percent of their teaching faculty; they either taught a majority-white or majority-black student population, with the latter moderating their otherwise token distinctiveness. White numerical minorities represented between 32-43 percent of their teaching faculty. While this number is not equivalent to black numerical minorities, white respondents said their minority status stood out to them especially when considering that their student populations were 97-99 percent black. Figure 1

illustrates the racial demographics of the research sites, showing how a holistic approach to the concept of representation (i.e., including employees and clients) relates to the experience of being a numeric minority in an organization.

---- *INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE* ----

Moreover, the idea that thresholds for whites to feel their numerical minority status are lower than thresholds of black numerical minorities is founded in the literature (e.g., see Renzulli et al. 2011). This is an important consideration for studying demographics in organizations, because whites are not typically in the minority due to their greater representation in wider society. For example, in the state in which this study takes place, the state labor force participation rate is 73 percent white among college-educated workers (ACS 2014 in Ruggles et al. 2017). In such a setting, a white person holding a job in which 57 percent of her coworkers are black would still represent a “fairly dramatic level of racially based sorting” (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993: 29).

## **Data**

This project draws on an 11-month ethnography in five public high schools conducted between July 2014 and June 2015, with intermittent follow-up visits over four additional months. It combines observations of classroom instruction, teacher meetings, teacher interactions in hallways and during lunch, and teacher gatherings outside of the workplace. I conducted in-person observations through shadowing 98 teachers (n=23 in Pine Grove; n=23 in Larksfield; n=20 in Crest Point; n=20 in Surrey Ridge; n=13 in Mt. Summit)<sup>6</sup>. Shadowing was the primary mode of ethnographic data collection, which generated around 1,100 typed pages of field notes detailing about 600 hours of observation. I also interviewed every teacher I shadowed, as well as the head principal at each school (n=5), for a total of 103 interviews. The typical interview lasted

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<sup>6</sup> One respondent worked in two schools.

between 60-90 minutes and was complemented by my spending up to half a day with the respondents while they worked.<sup>7</sup>

The sample of teacher participants who were interviewed and shadowed is 35 percent black, 25 percent male, with an average teaching experience of four years in the school and nine years in total. In comparison, the teacher population of all five schools overall (N=392) is 35 percent black, 40 percent male,<sup>8</sup> and has modal values of two to four years of teaching experience in the school and a total of 10-15 years teaching experience. While interview studies generally cannot achieve “representativeness” per standards of basic probability theory, they can achieve “saturation,” i.e. yield clear predictions of replicability under given conditions (Small 2009a:261; Small 2009b). By this sampling logic, cases (i.e., individuals) were added to the analysis with the goal of capturing the typical case for many demographic subgroups of teachers across the sites. This is a replication strategy which increases trustworthiness of the findings in multi-site studies (Yin 2009; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). When confronted by a lack of sufficient information about particular subgroups, either due to underdeveloped prior research or insufficient information in collected cases, I used a theoretical sampling strategy aimed at collecting a large proportion of numerical minority teachers and a smaller proportion of numerical majority teachers. This strategy had the advantage of capturing a fuller picture of the experiences of white and black minority teachers, because the data capture a larger share of these teachers within each school context. Due to small numbers of other-race respondents in the schools (n=10) and in this sample (two non-white Hispanic, three Asian), the analysis focuses on

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<sup>7</sup> More details about the interview methodology are available from the author by request.

<sup>8</sup> Male teachers in the sites in this study were not numeric tokens, according to Kanter’s (1977) definition based on gender. In Surrey Ridge, 30% of faculty were male; in the four other schools, male representation was 40-48%.

comparing the 58 white and 35 black teachers in the sample; of these, 21 were white minorities and 14 were black minorities.

I used case-pair matching as a method of case selection (Nielsen 2016). Case-pair matching enables the researcher to produce a list of potential respondents to recruit who are “equivalent” in their demographic background to a respondent in another school. I used a full list of respondents to a survey administered prior to shadowing ( $n=312$ )<sup>9</sup> and the CaseMatch package in R to do this. As in quantitative research designs that use matching, matching in qualitative research can help the researcher address individual differences that are not the focus of the process and outcomes in question, but which may influence the process and outcomes (Nielsen 2016; Weller and Barnes 2014). As a result of using this strategy, the sample demographics of interview respondents – by their race, age, years of experience in the school, certification, and gender – are balanced across schools.<sup>10</sup> A post-matching balance check verified that making comparisons between the groups can be regarded as trustworthy, based on the recommended limit of 0.25 for absolute standardized differences on covariates (Stuart 2010). In this sample, standardized differences ranged from 0.097 to -0.165.<sup>11</sup> Another benefit to this sampling strategy is that it is likely to reduce sampling bias and researcher bias, over recruitment strategies that rely on respondents’ volunteering or the researcher’s own gravitation to respondents with whom she is most comfortable.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> I used prior survey participation as an indication that potential respondents may be open to further participation in the study. The survey had response rates ranging from 69-92% per school.

<sup>10</sup> There is the concern that this number of individual characteristics (five) is high for a matching strategy. To reduce the constraints this could have imposed on sampling, gender was used as a secondary parameter, and six of the 98 individuals were near matches.

<sup>11</sup> Full results of the balance check available from author on request

<sup>12</sup> Shadowing a broad range of teachers helped me avoid becoming allied (or seen as allied) with any particular teacher clique. I documented this in a qualitative researcher journal I kept throughout my time in the field, which served as a supplement to data collection efforts and helped me check for researcher effects (Miles et al. 2014).



None of the potential respondents subsequently recruited declined participation in the study. Given the topic of the study, and the researcher's white racial identity, potential interviewer effects were deemed important and examined throughout the research process. Equivalent willingness to participate as well as equivalent length and depth of interview responses across races, as well as the researcher's keeping an ongoing record of reflections (see note 12), give the researcher confidence that interviewer effects were effectively reduced.<sup>13</sup>

### **Analytic Strategy**

I used interview and ethnographic data on strong ties to track and diagram tie dimensions and resulting resources. I determined which dyads or groups in the data had strong ties based on whether it/they demonstrated a high frequency of social interaction in the workplace (see Reagans 2011).<sup>14</sup> In the data preparation, I merged interview responses with fieldwork observations, which most often were confirmatory, but in some cases served to make up for missing data generated by underreporting in interviews.<sup>15</sup>

I first coded all data in MAXQDA software using an open coding approach, which resulted in the development of four major codes (work practices, teacher talk, leadership displays, and emotions) with 33 sub-codes (e.g., teaming, positive talk about other teachers, defending colleagues, venting). In my analysis, I used the coding to orient me to general trends in same-race ties by school context, constructing a condensed data comparison matrix (Miles et

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<sup>13</sup> Two factors about the researcher's background aided in this regard. The researcher disclosed to all schools her own prior work experience as a teacher in a school with a majority-black student and faculty population, as well as her current institutional affiliation. While the former assisted in developing rapport with black (and many white) respondents, the latter appealed to white majority respondents, who would comment on it.

<sup>14</sup> Examples of relationships coded as "strong" include the following: teachers who regularly interact within the workplace, in more than a superficial, in-passing way and at least every few days; and/or teachers who voluntarily see each other outside of work at least two times a month, or in a few cases, send text messages regularly outside the workday.

<sup>15</sup> There were no notable differences in underreporting by race.

al. 2014) from the coded cases to do so. I also visually mapped mechanisms that appeared to connect minority status to outcomes of resource access, following a qualitative pathway analytical approach which involves “building knowledge of what causes the mechanisms, the number of mechanisms, and how (if at all) they interact with one another” (Weller and Barnes 2014: 75). Each diagram examined a particular group of respondents’ documented interpersonal relationships that exhibited similar tie properties and resource outcomes; in this way I made horizontal comparisons between cases with similar resource outcomes, or vertical comparisons across cases that exhibited different resource outcomes. Given the analytic approach used and the small number of sites, this project represents a theory-centric variant of process tracing research, in which “causal mechanisms are understood as relatively simple, parsimonious pathways whereby X contributes to producing Y, but they are not theorized as sufficient causes of Y by themselves” (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 12). A strength of this approach is that the causal mechanisms identified in analysis can be generalized to contexts in which they are theoretically expected to operate.

In coding the qualitative field notes and interview transcripts, prominent aspects of teachers’ relationships emerged. I coded instances of strong ties by several properties, including proximity, whether the tie formed quickly, was a dyadic or a group tie, whether it involved collaboration, whether the tie spilled over from work to non-work domains, and whether it formed across departmental or occupational lines. I also coded the kinds of resources that seemed to result from these bonds: e.g., lesson plans, advice on how to do job tasks, answer keys, nice classrooms, quiet hallways, more free time (in the form of longer or additional planning time without students), classroom conditions that further aided classroom management or teaching success (e.g., smaller class sizes; teaching academically advanced students), and

encouragement. The resources that were most often mentioned could be grouped into three different conceptual categories: professional, political, and social-emotional.

In the professional resources category, I included human capital (i.e., the transmission of knowledge, skills, and information about how to do technical aspects of the job, including instruction and discipline) as well as the transmission of tacit knowledge about organizational procedures. In the political resources category, I included forms of support that either had the potential to elevate workers to better work outcomes, thereby making them look good to administrators, or buffered them from the authority and control of administrators or other colleagues. Political resources obtained through colleagues thus could include being defended from trouble, receiving positive attention from the administration, gaining advantages in the form of access to material resources (e.g., classroom equipment including technology, sufficient desks, bigger or cleaner classrooms) and better course schedules and assignments (e.g., smaller class sizes, higher-level courses). In the social-emotional category, I included resources such as having someone to vent to, friendship that encompassed support beyond work-related domains, and/or a feeling of belonging or personal closeness to colleagues. Though these categories emerged from the data themselves, the categories correspond to conceptualizations in other research, such as: resources gained through instrumental (i.e., professional, political) and expressive (i.e., social emotional) networks (Ibarra 1993); personal (i.e., emotional) as opposed to professional support in teachers' work (Hargreaves 1994); political evaluative processes in school settings (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999); and human capital (i.e., professional) versus economic capital (i.e., political) distinctions in school workplaces (Spillane, Hallett, and Diamond 2003).

## **FINDINGS**

In the findings presented below, I compare the experiences of white minority teachers as they formed same-race ties with white colleagues (white-white ties) to black minority teachers as

they formed same-race ties with their black colleagues (black-black ties). I focus on these two minority groups' same-race ties because these, and not cross-race ties, were the ones exhibiting gaps in resource transmission. Given these differences, I delve into the context and properties of the ties that help explain diverging resource acquisition, and the organizational practices that appeared to drive several aspects of these tie patterns. I contrast minorities' social ties along different dimensions of their ties, including speed, cliquishness, multiplexity, and expansiveness, and how these differences are a mechanism producing inequality in resource access. Finally, I compare the patterns observed between organizational minorities (i.e., white single-level minorities and black double-level minorities) to those observed among organizational majority groups (i.e., white non-minorities and black single-level minorities).

### **Minority Tie Resource Outcomes**

The resources numerical minority teachers acquired from their same-race ties with co-ethnics differed sharply in the areas of professional and political resources. While almost all white minorities received professional resources through their in-group ties, such as technical or academic knowledge, technical skills, organizational knowledge, or assistance in teaching and student discipline, about one-third of black double-level minorities reported similar professional resources from theirs (see Table 2).<sup>16</sup> Sharing of political resources showed a similar pattern: five out of 14 (36 percent) black minority ties, versus in 15 of 21 (71 percent) of white minority ties. Political resources included elevating a co-ethnic's status, chances for promotion, or course assignments through reporting favorably on their performance to administrators; or directly providing material resources or increased autonomy. Socio-emotional resources gained through minority ties, however, were more equally distributed across white ties and black ties.

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<sup>16</sup> The proportion of ties reported in Table 2 reflects a conservative estimate. Teachers often had multiple same-race ties, but I only counted each respondent once for the presence or absence of a same-race tie bearing a resource.

Supplemental t-tests on quantized data from the observed sample are consistent with basic percentage differences reported in Table 2. Both professional ( $t=3.46$ ) and political ( $t=2.17$ ) resource gaps from same-race ties were confirmed to be statistically significant at the  $p<0.05$  level, while social-emotional resources were not ( $t=-0.97$ ).<sup>17</sup> By comparison, these kinds of large resource gaps did not emerge among minorities' cross-race interactions.

---- *INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE* ----

### **Differences in Speed of Tie Formation**

Two organizational practices distinctively embedded white and black minority teachers into their respective workplaces, influencing the speed of tie formation among teachers in the minority. I find that white minorities' in-group ties formed quickly, while black minorities' in-group ties formed gradually. First, as indicated in research interviews with teachers, principals' hiring practices in the majority-black schools<sup>18</sup> involved selecting novice white minority teachers based mostly on white incumbents' (e.g., current teachers') referrals, drawn from incumbents' weak ties with their residential neighbors or prior colleagues, or the district's pre-existing contacts and contracts with several alternate-route teaching programs (e.g., Teach for America). These referrals encompassed white incumbents' involvement both in information sharing about the job opening, as well as putting in a good word to administrators who in turn directly called the applicant. Meanwhile, principals often selected novice black majority applicants whom they personally knew, or whom an incumbent black teacher knew, through common institutional membership (e.g., having been a former student at the high school, having attended the same Historically Black College or University (HBCU), having membership in the same

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<sup>17</sup> Tests of significance with qualitative data from nonrandom samples such as this one are possible (e.g., see Smilde 2005), but rely on strong statistical assumptions. In the present study, matching is a way of dealing with observational data where randomization is not used.

<sup>18</sup> Both of these principals were black, as were their entire administrative teams.

fraternity/sorority). These practices, though asymmetric, resulted in both groups' speedy assimilation into the faculty. Preexisting social ties, which were later elaborated in the workplace, were critical to the experience of both white minority and black majority teachers.

Principals' hiring practices in the majority-white schools<sup>19</sup> also featured different strategies for recruiting and selecting white and black hires, as evidenced from information in the teacher interviews. White hires drew heavily from kinship ties (e.g., relatives of current teachers) and institutionally validated ties (e.g., alumni status, graduates from a local teacher education program at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) which served as a pipeline into the district). Black hires, in contrast, mostly came to the district with prior teaching experience in majority-black school districts across the state. Several of the black minority teachers in this sample applied to the district during a local court case which mandated the district to hire more black minority teachers and school personnel; a few respondents stated in the research interviews that the court judgment motivated them to apply to the majority-white school.<sup>20</sup> This mandate took effect in 1969, but was not met until 2006. The implication of these diverging hiring practices on teachers is that most newly-hired white teachers came in with prior contacts or prior institutional affiliations which would help them quickly come to know a sub-set of others, while newly-hired black minority teachers were new to both their white and black colleagues.

These distinctive hiring practices by each school had different effects on the speed of tie formation between minority teachers in those schools. Overall, white teachers in majority-black workplaces described the process of finding and making friends when they first arrived at the

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<sup>19</sup> Two of the principals were white, with one black assistant principal on each of their administrative teams; one principal was black, with one black assistant principal on his administrative team.

<sup>20</sup> As recently as 2005, court orders to increase the hiring of black teachers have been common in majority-white school districts in the South (see, e.g., Parker 2017). The prevalence of legal structures in shaping the hiring of black teachers to achieve desegregation might induce competition among minorities (e.g., Duguid, Loyd, and Tolbert 2012) and increased hostility from whites (e.g., DiTomaso 2013).

school as easy. For example, Ms. Elkins described how she made a “fast friend” with a colleague who came from her same teacher training program. Though she did not find the veteran teachers on her hallway to be available or approachable, by hanging out with her “fast friend,” she found and befriended a supportive network of teachers along her colleague’s hallway. Like several white novice teachers, Elkins also spoke of the importance of teacher-training days at the beginning of the year for finding friends with whom she would remain close for the entire school year. She met both new and experienced teachers at these training sessions, the latter of whom were attending in a mentoring capacity.

For Mrs. Oxby, a white minority teacher, it was a white mother with whom she occasionally spoke in her neighborhood park, who worked at the school and encouraged Oxby to apply. Once she got the job, Oxby worked in a department with six other white teachers and five black teachers, but what stood out to her was the support extended to her by the white teachers. She reflected:

When I first arrived at Larksfield, [the white teachers] had been there a long time and had formed a bond, and I was welcomed into the [department]. ... They wanted me to succeed, they wanted their department to succeed. We had to be united. ... Working at Larksfield, you are against – things are not going to be as easy for you.

Mrs. Oxby quickly found support and belonging among her white coworkers because they were united through both the challenges they faced on the job and their dedication to success for their students and themselves. Mrs. Oxby’s reference to how “things are not going to be as easy for you,” she explained, pertained to being willing to teach a poor, black student population as a way to make a contribution to society. In the interviews, many white minorities (n=9) also described their awareness that not all teachers shared this missional attitude. They described hearing what they described as racist comments some other white colleagues made (such as “Why do you want to teach these kids?”). Some white respondents also lamented being perceived as racially insular by their black colleagues. These understandings of racial dynamics seldom altered the

acquisition and upkeep of quick ties, or the tendency towards demographic homophily, however. For example, one of Mrs. Oxby's white colleagues perceived early in her tenure that black teachers probably thought the white women teachers "just wanted to hang out with each other and nobody else," and in response "tried so hard" to form relationships with black teachers. Nevertheless, this white colleague still interacted mostly with her quick ties, which were her in-group ties. Moreover, in interviews with the black teachers she had worked hard to befriend, neither of them mentioned her as a close colleague.

In contrast, black teachers in majority-white workplaces stepped into schools where the time it took to find similar others made interaction a challenge, as Ms. Ruscoe describes. She did not arrive with any prior ties, and there was no in-house teacher-training day to meet her cohort or informal mentors (though novice teachers did have a district-wide workshop to attend, neither Ruscoe nor any of the black minority teachers in these schools were novice teachers). She contrasts the ease of finding ties in her previous majority-black school with the social situation in her majority-white school.

Everybody there is black. Everybody there is from similar backgrounds, everybody there pretty much went to Davenport State [the local HBCU]. So everybody know, like, knew each other prior to working there. We just have certain things that we do. Everybody understands that. Which is different from working in Martin County where you have a more diverse setting and you have to learn, you know, different people coming from different backgrounds and things like that. So I would say that the teacher interaction was better there. Because people had more things in common than here, where you don't have a lot in common with people from different backgrounds.

Though Ruscoe calls Martin County diverse, the teacher demographics in her school are 80 percent white, 15 percent black, and 5 percent other races. Black teachers in the minority partially overcame this steep social transition, but social ties did not emerge quickly. As Ms. Ruscoe describes, she did not meet her co-ethnic Mr. Lowry right away.

RUSCOE: [Mr. Lowry and I] just, we just click. The thing about it, when I first got here, he didn't even speak to me. He didn't even talk to me.

JENNIFER: Why do you think that – why did it change? Why did he not talk to you?



RUSCOE: Because, he was just like, this is the new girl and I'm not gonna talk to her. Which is so how I would've been.

JENNIFER: If you were in his position?

RUSCOE: Mhm [affirmative]

JENNIFER: And then, what—how did it change?

RUSCOE: Umm, the custodian that was here [Rory (black)], I remember the first day we met. The custodian was walking me out to my car to get something. And he told me that Mr. Lowry used to play in the NFL or something. And [when I met Mr. Lowry,] I asked if he still had some money. And then we just kinda laughed and that kind of thing. And at the end, umm, he got to talking about golf. And, I asked him did he know my dad, and he knew my dad, they played golf together. And then we just hit it off.

For a tie to form between Ms. Ruscoe and Mr. Lowry, a third party—such as the custodian, who was also black—first had to introduce them.

A second organizational practice, classroom placement, affected the speed of tie formation for the two minority groups. Proximity due to classroom location mattered for numerical minorities in the majority-black versus majority-white schools, but in different ways. In interviews with teachers in one of the majority-black schools, Larksfield, black and white teachers noted how white teachers' rooms were placed together. Often it took pointing out to realize this, as one white minority recalled: "I remember one year, a student commented, 'It's all white people teaching [on your hall]. We do stand out to the kids.'" These arrangements facilitated frequent interaction as soon as the placement happened; as Mr. Thatcher recalls, once he was moved to his hall with mostly-white colleagues in his department (an action the administration took without Thatcher's request), "we have little impromptu, five-minute 'staff meetings' between the algebra II teachers because me, Krantz, Terk, and Newman all teach algebra II. So we'll get together in the hall and hash things out." In contrast, in his prior classroom where he was not clustered around white teachers, he described feeling that he had "no interaction." Pine Grove featured a similar pattern of whites being placed in proximity to other whites, though the size of the clusters were smaller (e.g., clusters in Larksfield were four-five teachers each, versus clusters of three teachers each at Pine Grove).

Ms. Newman, a white, brand new science teacher at Larksfield who replaced a teacher who quit mid-year, exemplifies how proximity fomented quick ties with in-group members. She regularly sought the professional guidance of the white teacher across the hall from her, Mrs. Libbey. Ms. Newman also used her informal work time, such as morning duty in the gym, to stand and chat with Mrs. Libbey. Through these conversations she quickly learned procedures in the school and the social structure of faculty, such as who to go to for what. Ms. Newman also asked two white teachers on her hall for help entering grades, who provided her with access to one of the scarce working computers connected to the intranet in the school. Within months, Newman was described as a “natural teacher” by the other faculty. At the end-of-year teacher lunch just four months later, she was fully incorporated into the English teacher’s social group, discussing her plans to join them that evening at an outdoor festival in their neighborhood.

The role of proximity was conspicuously absent in black double-level minorities’ responses, however. Who they consulted and felt close to did not align with factors of convenience. Several mentioned they were not placed near other black teachers. The lack of proximity elongated black minority teachers’ process of building same-race ties. For instance, as Mrs. Yeurick describes:

There’s a new black teacher in biology who is way over there. She seems really nice. But I’d have to make a special effort to see her. I made a mental note to go find her and ask her at end of the year last year how things were going, and she seems to be fitting in and doing fine.

Similarly, Ms. Norton’s same-race tie with Mr. Nickel in their majority-white school formed only very gradually. Both had been teaching in Surrey Ridge for six or more years. However, it wasn’t until Mr. Nickel’s drug education class was scheduled to use Ms. Norton’s science classroom during her break that the two actually had a conversation. Once they did, they found they had a lot to discuss and learn from one another’s experiences as minorities in the school.

They shared information from separate conversations they had with the sole black administrator, which helped them better navigate the professional atmosphere in which they worked.

Consequently, the speed of tie formation impacted each group's access to professional, political, and social-emotional support. While quickly-forming ties allowed white minorities such as Ms. Oxyby and Ms. Newman to acquire a range of resources sooner and over a longer time span, black minorities such as Ms. Ruscoe and Ms. Norton acquired the resources only gradually, in pace with their tie formation. White minority teachers were generally incorporated into the social networks of white teachers on their hall quickly; such rapidly-developing alliances resulted in professional resources such as lesson planning help and political resources such as colleagues influencing new white minority teachers' teaching assignments into courses they desired the subsequent year. Black minority teachers, in contrast, did not quickly access professional or political resources from their black colleagues. Rather, black minorities new to the organization typically only began to acquire social-emotional support from their in-group by the end of their first year, and sometimes professional and political resources in years after that.

### **Differences in Cliquishness of Ties**

Organizational practices of classroom assignment and principal involvement in informal social relations within the school shaped white minority teachers' group ties on the one hand and black minorities' dyadic ties on the other. That is, minorities' physical location and social position in the organization, in terms of spatial arrangements and principal interference, impacted the cliquishness property of their ties. Cliques, or cohesive subgroups that are dense in and among themselves, consist of three people or more (Wasserman and Faust 1994). The subgroups that emerged in my field observations were between three to six members in size, and were mostly formalized maximal cliques (i.e., all members had direct ties to every other member). Clique or clan members' interactions at work were more frequent within their subgroup than

outside of it. In addition, respondents with cliquish ties named the majority of their close ties as those within their clique. In contrast, for respondents lacking cliquish ties, dyads consisted of a tie between two actors who were otherwise disconnected from their in-group, or were between two actors who also shared multiple other ties (i.e., potentially transitive), but rarely appeared at work together as a subgroup. That is, their shared ties were not in the same place at the same time.

In the two majority-black schools in the sample, principals engaged in two interrelated organizational practices regarding spatial placements that contributed to the segregation of faculty by race; subsequently, these placements made in-group tie formation not only convenient, but institutionally sanctioned. While academic departments were often racially balanced in these schools, their placement into clusters in the school building was not. First, in accordance with a district “Academies” initiative, ninth graders were required to have their own dedicated space within the school. For ninth grade teachers, this meant they became isolated in one hallway (Pine Grove) or one building (Larksfield), drawing these teachers out of their home departments. Second, when not directed by mandates, principals used implicit sorting to assign teachers to areas in the school. For example, one hallway with English and science teachers in Larksfield had five white minority teachers and no black teachers. In the math department at this school, most of the black math teachers (n= 3 of 4 total) were clustered in the North building, and most of the white math teachers (n=4 of 5 total) were clustered on one hall in the South building.<sup>21, 22</sup> When I came to Larksfield to ask the principal permission to conduct this research, he immediately said, “You’ll fit right in with the [xyz] teachers,” the ones on a specific hall whose

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<sup>21</sup> A similar pattern was seen with Electives and Special Education in Pine Grove. It is important to note that department membership in the majority-black schools was integrated, but segregated across space.

<sup>22</sup> Part of the consolidation and stabilization of classroom assignments on certain hallways happened when teachers would request not to be moved year after year. Both black and white teachers in these schools made these requests.

demographics I match. Moreover, teachers regarded as strong disciplinarians (mostly black males) were placed in specific high-traffic locations of the school, as principals believed these areas needed more supervision due to frequent student fights in those hallways. While this placement practice was used at one of the majority-white schools, it was a more pervasive organizing schema in majority-black faculty schools in this study based upon the number of teachers whose placement it affected. Again, this strategy drew teachers out of their home departments.

For black teachers who were minorities in majority-white faculty, organizational arrangements that singled black teachers out on their halls had to do with principals' organizing the school mostly by department, in combination with hiring only one black teacher per department. There was only one pair and one cluster of three (that is, more than two teachers next door or across the hall from one another) black teachers in the arrangement of classrooms in the majority-white schools – at Surrey Ridge and Crest Point, respectively – compared to eight pairs and seven clusters of white minorities in the majority-black schools. However, this lack of proximity did not block the formation of same-race ties for black minorities altogether. Rather, because the workday in majority-white schools featured more free time for teachers, black minority teachers had more opportunities to interact with teachers of their choice. However, almost all visits to classrooms separated by distance were between dyads, not in cliques. Part of this constraint on cliquishness for black minorities pertains to the logistics required to gather groups at a scheduled time, versus the embedded routine white minorities had of talking to their neighbors during the daily change of classes, when teachers would stand in the hallway for five minutes, three times per day.

Another organizational practice that embedded minority teachers into the social fabric of their school in unique ways was the level of involvement principals had in teachers' informal

social interactions. White minority teachers' cliques became visible outside of their hallways, as they socialized together after school standing by the buses and at faculty meetings. Most times, they chose to stand, sit, and speak with their co-ethnics. The principals in these schools took a *laissez faire* approach to such socializing, neither joining in nor verbally discouraging these conversations. In addition, white minorities' cliquishness was observed plainly when they collaborated on many overlapping, cross-departmental activities, such as sponsoring the student journalism club, going on joint field trips, organizing teacher union activities,<sup>23</sup> or hosting elaborate birthday celebrations for each other with large signs, balloons, and food in each other's classrooms.

In the interviews, their colleagues—black and white alike—referred to white minorities not as individuals, but as a group. For example, Ms. Richardson commented on the “club” of white male – and one white female – teachers that sat together in the cafeteria on a daily basis. In Larksfield and Pine Grove, the formal procedure was that each teacher was to sit with their own students at one table, but these teachers would pull up their chairs at one teacher's table and sat together daily.

While observing lunch rotations in the cafeteria, Ms. Richardson identifies the group of four white teachers sitting near us. “They have a club. We call it a club (student sitting nearby nods in agreement). They're always talking to each other.” *Larksfield fieldnotes 3-17-15*

In comments like these, white minorities typically demonstrated an awareness of racial dynamics in their school pertaining to voluntary self-segregation among faculty, which they said became most visible in faculty meetings. Only one white minority teacher saw this as a problematic practice, telling white teachers who were standing together that they better not do that, or they would be seen as racist. These teachers disagreed and continued to associate openly

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<sup>23</sup> Union activities involved mixed race participation, but the major recruiter of colleagues at Larksfield was a white minority teacher.

as a clique. And, while a few white minority teachers said they made intentional efforts to diversify their cliques, and were keenly aware of being seen as a white group, they did not change their cliquish behavior. They continued to sit together and were not asked to move by principals.

Conversely, when black minority teachers went to faculty meetings, they were not permitted to stand, sit, or speak as a group. When this norm was violated at Surrey Ridge, administrators would ask black minority teachers to sit apart from each other. At Crest Point, loose management oversight similarly allowed teacher colleagues to police their black peers' choice of where to sit. At all three schools, in communal spaces such as cafeterias and hallways, black minority teachers' in-group ties in majority-white settings rarely appeared in groups larger than a dyad. As a choice of social affiliation that did not suit the institutional culture, black minority teachers were being called into account to "do race" in an institutionally acceptable way (West and Zimmerman 1987; Fenstermaker, West, and Zimmerman 2002). The message here for Ms. Norton was,

NORTON: But when we come together as a whole group? *[laughs]* Umm, *[laughs again]* we don't, we tried, we can't. I say 'we,' *[I mean]* the minorities generally, it's a problem if we all get together.

JENNIFER: It's a problem? Why is it a problem?

NORTON: It's, I think, in all honesty, I'll tell you this. I've had several situations where it's like *[we get asked]* "Why are y'all all sitting together? Spread out." Why? They *[whites]* don't have to! Y'know, the majority doesn't have to. Why is it initially an issue when all of the minorities come together in a group as if we're planning an uprising?

I inquired further about this practice and learned that the sole black administrator at Surrey Ridge, an assistant principal, was the one who asked the black minority teachers not to sit together. The black minority teachers concluded that the assistant principal was doing the bidding of the other white administrators, because the teachers never interacted with this administrator otherwise. As Ms. Norton's comment shows, the race performance of black

minority teachers sitting together came under questioning, in turn shaping institutional routines of how black minority teachers should sit when they attended a regular faculty meeting. Indeed, at the 16 formal faculty meetings I attended at all three majority-white schools, black minority teachers rarely sat in groups of larger than two.

This policing also likely played a role in black minority teachers' lower levels of collaboration with one another on shared activities. When a black student approached Ms. Norton to express interest in starting a minority student union at the school, Ms. Norton told this student to approach the administrators for permission because they would respond better to a black minority student than to a black minority teacher. Once permission was gained, Ms. Norton agreed to sponsor the club, but was dismayed to find that none of her black colleagues would co-sponsor with her. They told her they were "leery" of being labeled as a minority. In a work environment that black minorities described as "tense," "uptight," and "competitive," they did not want to attract negative attention. Further analysis by gender provides some suggestive evidence that black males experienced different kinds of policing by administrators than did black females. In comparing the nine black female minorities and five black male minorities, being asked not to sit together after school was a practice applied mostly to black females, while during the school day, black males would sit or stand together if administrators assigned them to supervise an area at the same time (e.g., lunch duty).

While black minority teachers still gained access to professional, political, and social-emotional resources through their largely dyadic ties, the property of cliquishness for minority whites enabled them to acquire more political resources *for their group* through the additive advantage of voice and collaboration that come through cohesive (i.e., dense, overlapping) ties. For example, during regular "data meetings" at Larksfield, white minorities would defend the quality of one another's work to the principal, or resist principal requests for doing extra work.



Here, as well as in seven other cases among white minorities, collaboration through cliques resulted in sharing either political or professional resources, or both. In these ways, white minorities behaved like black teachers in the majority, who would also vouch for particular colleagues within and across race lines and resist extra work by saying things to the principal such as, “We’re not doing the data cards. We have too many students.”

### **Differences in Multiplexity of Ties**

The practices principals in majority-black and majority-white schools used for hiring racial minority teachers diverged, and so therefore did the degree of work-life overlap minorities found in their in-group social ties upon arrival there. This overlap between work and non-work domains, termed multiplexity, captures “multistranded relationships” that contain more than one role (Campbell, Marsden, and Hurlbert 1986:105) and combine spheres of life, such as affiliations outside of work (Kuwabara, Luo, and Sheldon 2010; Shah, Parker, and Waldstrøm 2017). I describe white minorities’ multiplex ties as “thick,” comprising many strands, and black minorities’ multiplex ties as “thinner,” tending towards uniplexity and limited overlap of domains (on terminology, see Hardin 2002; Kuwabara et al. 2010; Smith-Lovin 2007). While relying on incumbent referrals sped the typical white minority’s tie formation with their in-group, it also fostered social and economic mixing – that is, multiplex relations characteristic of embedded networks (Uzzi 1996). Whites’ weak ties coming in were converted to strong ones as they elaborated their multiplex relations. For example, they discovered that they shared non-work affiliations or got to know each other personally through shared, non-required activities, such as sponsoring student clubs. Black minorities’ social ties featured some social and economic mixing as well, but it tended to take place solely inside the school; in this way they reduced overlap by separating home from work (Methot and LePine 2016).

In interviews with and observations of white teachers, residing in the same neighborhood was widely mentioned. Neighborhood similarity came up often in their interactions and conversations, and others' comments about them, in the field. For example, after school at Pine Grove, white teachers typically made plans to hang out after work:

After school by the buses, while debriefing their days standing in a circle, Dr. Eckert (white) said to the group of four white teachers she stood with, "I'm ready for a margarita. I have the stuff at home for it." Ms. Anderson (white) says she will have one too since they carpooled into work together. *Pine Grove fieldnotes 12-5-14*

In addition to social occasions and community events, teachers got together outside of school for work-related tasks. Some white minorities spent Sundays grading and lesson planning together in the local coffee shop. While eight of the white teachers at Larksfield lived in the same neighborhood, most black majority teachers in their school did not. This finding emphasizes the importance of neighborhood residence to coworker relations (Kornblum 1974).

The importance of multiplex ties to resource access for white teachers pertains to increasing their opportunities for professional and political resource exchange. Either by continuing explicitly professional activities beyond work hours, or by creating environments where information sharing was unhampered by organizational constraints (such as time, proximity, and the presence of other colleagues, administrators, and students), multiplex ties spilling beyond the school walls were beneficial in for securing a range of resources. For example, Mr. Updike explains that he gains most of his professional advice from teacher-leaders beyond the workplace and the workday.

Coach Cousins [*a white minority teacher*] was helpful to me a lot. A few times, I went out to drink with teachers. Like I'd talk to her. 'Cause she, you know [...] she knows her stuff. And she knows how to discipline these kids. Like she loves these kids. She loves it here. You know? She's someone that's solidified in the school that doesn't plan on leaving. But teacher leaders other than that, I guess you know Dr. Cosben across the hall [*a black majority teacher*], we had a rough beginning of the year. She used to complain that my class was too loud and stuff. And she, she got to know my kids and realized that I was dealing with some really bad classes. So, she sort of understood then [and] was a little bit more supportive after that.

Mr. Updike also commented that it was easy for Dr. Cosben to find fault in his classroom management, when he had 20-something students and she only had five. While he taught an entry-level science course, she taught an upperclass specialty course. For reasons of both knowing her advantages and receiving her disapproval, Mr. Updike's comment shows how proximity in the workplace can be a liability for coworker interaction, whereas being outside of the school (i.e., a form of multiplexity) can enable it. Topics of discussion at regular after-hours drinks included which teachers were struggling and discussion on why; how teachers built rapport with and helped their students; and informal reports on behavior and achievement of specific students.

In contrast, for black minority teachers, multiplex ties did not arise from or form around shared residential status, as they often did for white minorities. Instead, when multiplex ties did happen for black minorities, they were built around further social, cultural or associational commonalities that gave black teachers a platform of similarity beyond only race. While incumbent referrals and other insular hiring practices made their white majority colleagues' ties multiplex from the start, or at least very visible to them, black minorities had to discover these shared platforms with their in-group often through free time during the workday that enabled them to interact.<sup>24</sup> For example, while bringing her son to a black colleague's student club before school, Mrs. Avery discovered that Mrs. Grisham had a similar upbringing to her own, that they were both sorority sisters, and that both their dads were high-level school administrators in other districts. Similarly, through getting to know a custodian at school who in turn spoke with them both, Ms. Ruscoe and Mr. Lowry discovered their common HBCU alumni status with one another. Sometimes this knowledge was facilitated by the principal. That is, another layer of

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<sup>24</sup> The organizational practice of more free time for teachers was unique to the majority-white district, including a 20-minute morning break and being able to remain in their rooms during lunch.

organizational practices impacting the degree of multiplexity characterizing black minority teachers' ties was when principals introduced new black faculty to the group by including information about where they graduated from college. In interviews, black minority teachers in Crest Point and Mt. Summit spoke about how PWI or HBCU alumni status made them initiate friendly—or, in Mt. Summit, receive unfriendly—contact with the colleague, depending on whether he/she shared this status in common. This outside affiliation made the platform of shared race culturally and socially meaningful as it brought similar interests and prior experiences to the relationship. All three of the majority-white schools hired black minority teachers from both backgrounds; in two of the schools, college background similarity simultaneously helped forge multiplex ties with some co-ethnics, and hindered them with others.

However, in most cases, these discovered platforms of similarity did not lend themselves to or develop further outside of the workplace. The reason black teachers gave for abiding by separation of work and home life pertained to the exclusion they witnessed and felt as a byproduct of their white colleagues' very thick ties. As Mrs. Avery remarked,

Initially yes, I formed friendships with other [white] teachers here quickly, but I soon discovered that they were not genuine. When it was time to go to lunch, I was not invited to lunch. Also hearing conversations about after-hours activities they had, I realized the same thing. [JENNIFER: was this true for other black teachers?] It's true for all black teachers not being invited.

Mrs. Avery set these relationships in direct contrast to the thick multiplex ties she enjoyed, and still enjoys, from her prior majority-black workplace:

Those [relationships with colleagues at my prior school] were real friendships. We still go to celebrations of homecoming, still text each other to say good morning, meet for girls breakfast, go to the parade of homes together, each other's birthday parties. Those friendships have lasted a lifetime. But developing relationships beyond work—that hasn't happened for me, not here. ... Here, we can and do talk about life with each other, our lives outside of work, which we get the chance to do right after school, or during duty in the gym or bus duty in the morning.

Mrs. Avery's reaction to the exclusionary dynamics she felt from her white colleagues were echoed in other interviews with black minorities. For example, Ms. Norton noted that she did not see teachers outside of school, "but white teachers do everything together. If they invited me I would go. I stay friendly and approachable." Ms. Norton thus found a way to navigate cross-race interpersonal ties in ways that did not initiate anything beyond the workplace. She used this same approach in her in-group interpersonal relations at work, not initiating play-dates between her sons and Mrs. Inman's children, but instead staying long after the school day to have them play while she could talk with Mrs. Inman. This multiplex tie, situated within the school, helped fulfill Norton's desire for relationships with colleagues who were also mothers, which she said were not forthcoming from her white mother colleagues. In addition to motherhood, the platform of similarity supporting Norton and Inman's tie was their shared alumna status from the same high school. Without platforms such as these, Norton did not cultivate ties – and especially not multiplex ties – with other black faculty members.

A third example, Ms. Rose, shows how black teachers engaged one another on non-work-related matters during the school day. This support helped her focus on her job and not worry about stress stemming from her life outside of work—such as her family ("the house") or graduate school. In close bonds, such as those with three black colleagues she named, she said:

You may talk about your own frustrations. You may talk about something that made you happy, you may talk about what it is you are trying to figure out for next week, you know, kind of like general stuff. Or you may talk about personal issues, you know, from the house and how it may be affecting you here, you know, like, I'm in [graduate] school so there's times when I'm stressed out and I need to vent, so I would go to them in order to vent, because it has nothing to do with my professional job here. So I wouldn't just pick anybody to say that to.

Ms. Rose felt comfortable talking with her three close friends at work, who were black: Mr. Lowry, Ms. Ruscoe, and Ms. Briar. But she did not need to get together outside of work to get the support she needed from them. For Ms. Rose, the function of their social support, whether it

was about home or work, was for the purpose of getting her job done well. For instance, the frustrations, Rose explained, pertained to her white colleagues' personal feelings about their black students that could "interfere with what our real reason is for being here:" the common goal of student achievement.

The locus distinction in minorities' thick versus thin multiplex ties (i.e., taking place across home and work life domains, or only while at work) highlights the contrast that, while broad social support was available for black minorities from their in-group while at work, it did not generate the same kinds of shared experiences which could build new platforms of similarity outside of work. Importantly, however, black minorities' multiplex ties created a place where they felt safe to air their experiences of race-based discrimination in the workplace. In turn, sharing these experiences reinforced strong interpersonal bonds and became itself a platform of similarity, centered around school life. For example, Ms. Ruscoe described being made to feel by white colleagues, that "You don't have any ideas. You don't make sense because you're black." In other examples, in their interviews, Mr. Lowry and Mrs. Avery both explained how they were bothered by the way their white colleagues would complain about the principal and the students, both of whom were black. Each of these teachers had multiplex ties with Ms. Ruscoe and Ms. Grisham, respectively, ties which were based on shared outside-of-school interests and backgrounds, but in which they could also speak candidly about their social experiences at work. Experiences of perceived anti-black attitudes were common for black minorities (8 of 14), but perceived anti-white attitudes were relatively rare for white minorities (2 of 21). The greater presence of discrimination at work for black minorities suggests that the meaning of social-emotional resources acquired through multiplex ties is different for, and perhaps more essential to, black minority teachers than white minority teachers.

### **Differences in Expansiveness of Ties**

The organizational practice influencing whether teachers interacted with other school employees who were not teachers was rooted in a lack of policing of these interactions. This practice facilitated in-group cross-occupational ties, under conditions where opportunities for them existed (e.g., where there was adequate representation in these roles). Following Portes and Landolt (2000), such expansive ties refer to broad networks that extend beyond an immediate status group to encompass the entire community that shares an identity. These ties could be downward in their status reach with staff such as custodians, office workers, and food service workers; or lateral or upward when interacting with other professionals (e.g., administrators, counselors, librarians). Both kinds of expansive ties were more prevalent for black minority teachers than white minority teachers because most whites who worked in the majority-black schools were teachers.

In downward-status ties, black minority teachers and service workers found social support in numbers. In informal or school-sanctioned gatherings outside of the school building, they felt free to congregate together in groups. In Crest Point, non-teaching staff were included in teachers' extracurricular tasks as well as celebratory, school-wide after-hours work functions. Black minority teachers also sat with same-race custodial, transportation, and food service workers at the faculty and staff Christmas party and the end-of-year teacher appreciation lunch. In Surrey Ridge, black minority teachers would go on walks around the track with black teaching assistants in the morning, after reporting to work but before classes started. In these informal settings and in cross-functional groups, principals did not police black cliques. While black minority teachers did not sit in groups with other black teachers during the workday, they did sit with black teaching assistants at events off-campus such as graduation ceremonies and teacher orientations.

During the regular work day and inside the school building, black minority teachers intentionally sought out other black workers with whom to socialize, most of whom were not nearby, not in their department, and often not in their occupational category. Mr. Lowry, for example, sought out Ms. Norma, the cafeteria manager, to include her in the fantasy football competition. Ms. Rose sought out one of the three black custodians to give them money to buy her lunch when they left campus to buy theirs, casually and regularly entering their office without knocking, which I did not see any other teacher do. The same closeness of interaction was seen in the way black personnel would make frequent pop-in visits to black minority teachers' classrooms. In the example below, the black assistant principal and the black bookkeeper at Crest Point entered Ms. Ruscoe's room to deliver her lunch and convey a message. While minorities seeking one another out regardless of role is not necessarily surprising, it was striking that those who stopped by Ms. Ruscoe's room were exclusively black.

There were numerous interruptions during my interview with Ms. Ruscoe, during which she had no students. Mr. Dillinger (black assistant principal) came and delivered lunch to her at one point. And the bookkeeper, Gloria Raubach (black), came in to return \$65 of education funds for Ms. Ruscoe to use before they expired. *Crest Point fieldnotes 4-4-15*

Caring, "sweet" actions by black colleagues in other occupational groups toward black minority teachers in the majority-white schools were not interpreted similarly by white teachers in the same setting. Rather, white teachers found interactions with the bookkeeper frustrating. Moreover, no close personal or professional relationships between white teachers and black administrators were observed in these settings.

Expansive ties that were lateral- and upward-status allowed the flow of some professional and political resources to black minority teachers, especially at Crest Point, the research site with greater representation of blacks in leadership and professional non-teaching positions.<sup>25</sup> Black

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<sup>25</sup> Crest Point had a black head principal, one black assistant principal, one black counselor, and a black librarian, compared to a single black assistant principal in Surrey Ridge and Mt. Summit.



minority teachers' ties with black staff (i.e., non-professional colleagues) were primarily multiplex ties through which staff would ask for advice about life-related matters (such as purchasing a car), and teachers would initiate including them in teachers' social activities. In sum, faculty and staff were embedded together in the organization and had opportunities to interact. This organizational embeddedness enabled expansive ties to form; consequently, black staff would sometimes provide professional and political resources to black minority teachers. In return, teachers offered staff greater social-emotional inclusion in the core function of the school.

### **Comparisons to Organizational Majorities and Cross-Race Ties**

The analysis above compares racial numerical minorities in their respective workplaces. In doing so, it has grappled with how local demographic composition differently impacts a societal minority group (blacks) as compared to a societal majority group (whites). Because these minority groups are inherently asymmetric – the former is a double-level minority, the latter a single-level minority – additional comparison of numerical minorities to numerical majorities provides some clarification of the relative contribution of organizational practices and minority status to the mechanism of social tie formation and resource outcomes.

Compared to double-level minority blacks, single-level minority blacks – that is, black teachers who work in majority-black schools, but maintain racial minority status in society – fare substantially better in their professional resource outcomes from same-race ties ( $t=2.08$ ), and fare the same in their political and emotional resource outcomes from these ties (see Table 2). Their tie properties – quickly-forming, cliquish, and thick – stemmed in large part from organizational practices that fostered in-group coworker support, just as they did for single-level minority whites in the same workplaces. However, the limits to black single-level minorities' access to political resources from same-race colleagues points to a different mechanism than either organizational practices or the tie properties. Fixed and often limited political resources at the

organizational level were being distributed across greater numbers among blacks in the majority than among whites in the minority. As under-resourced organizations are one manifestation of societal racial minority status due to discriminatory allocation processes outside the organization (e.g., see Wooten and Couloute 2017), this mechanism can be classified as the effect of being a societal minority on one's work experiences. For example, while Ms. Bennett, a single-level minority black teacher in Larksfield, is highly-connected to her fellow black colleagues, she described an arduous process of securing material resources for her classroom. She was dismayed to see that other teachers – the very same-race neighboring teachers with whom she gave and received professional resources – quickly took the new desks that were placed in the hallways as a communal resource at the beginning of the year. To find tables that were not broken, Bennett was forced to go classroom to classroom asking teachers if she could have tables they were not using, piecing together materials in a makeshift fashion. In this and other areas of gaining material resources from her colleagues and administrators, she had spotty success until she made repeated attempts and also called on cross-race ties to contribute. There were six other similar cases among black single-level minorities.

Whites in the majority can be thought of as holding the “non-minority” condition; they are neither a minority inside nor outside the organization. Table 2 shows that their resource outcomes are very similar to white minorities’. This finding suggests that white numerical minorities do not have much of a “minority” experience; they benefit from organizational practices as majority groups do. Non-minority whites were hired via incumbent referrals, were placed in classrooms near in-group department members, and were not informally policed. Strikingly, the thickness of white non-minority teachers’ multiplex ties surpassed even single-level minorities’. For example, at both Mt. Summit and Surrey Ridge, very thick multiplex ties developed during vacations that groups of teachers took together outside of school time. Many

times, these ties overcame gaps of generational differences. The ties were strengthened by having motherhood in common, which was a commonality elevated to a higher level by the fact that teachers actually knew one another's children.

LYONS: We used to have teacher get-togethers at Mrs. Christensen's (white) farmhouse and we'd go [there] for the weekend. Hazel [Rife] (white) was part of that and then kind of new friends like Ramona [Reiman] (white) who hadn't been here that long.

JENNIFER: What kinds of things do you have in common or why do you think you get along?

LYONS: Some of it may be – I wonder if there's like a, you know, character-type that's drawn to English, do you know what I mean? I mean, really, like that – I don't know. And so that's part of it. Some of it has to do with motherhood or even like, others with grandmotherhood, that kind of stuff. Some of them, I've taught their kids and so that's kind of funny. So there's that connection.

Mrs. Lyons' English department was comprised of 14 teachers, all white, and 11 of them women. But thick multiplex ties were not particular to the English department, not homogeneous by gender, and not exclusively expressed outside of the school. Mrs. Lyons described intensely personal and social expressions of solidarity and friendship that took place in school, such as a weekly teacher prayer group that was held before school and led by a white male teacher.

Although many non-minority whites had expansive ties, which white single-level minorities lacked, these did not reflect in greater resource acquisition (same for non-minority blacks). In fact, non-minority whites appeared to do less well in resource acquisition than their white minority counterparts. Majority whites secured fewer political resources than did white minorities. And, partly due to having fewer black teacher colleagues, white majorities lacked the magnitude of resource access through their cross-race ties that white minorities had.

For the four demographic groups, cross-race ties generally formed in a gradual, dyadic, uniplex fashion: that is, similar to double-level minorities' same-race ties, but for different reasons. There were two unique catalysts for cross-race dyadic cooperation, leading to acquisition of different kinds of resources (see Table 2, "Other Resources"). White single-level minorities turned to black single-level minorities for help acquiring cultural fit with the majority-

black student population and administration. Black double-level minorities turned to white non-minority colleagues when they shared negative experiences with a shared third white colleague, and sought protection from sabotage from that colleague. White single-level minorities' cross-race ties were unique in that many of them formed quickly. This difference can also help account for their cross-race resource advantage. Black double-level minorities' cross-race resource advantages are instead rooted in organizational practices such as the principals pairing them with opposite-race teachers to co-teach or co-coach, as well as principals' hands-off approach to mediating collegial conflict. These practices mandated and necessitated cross-race support, respectively. Despite slight differences in these other types of resources (see Table 2), which both minority groups had, most resources extracted from cross-race ties were substitutable for resources available through same-race ties.<sup>26</sup>

## DISCUSSION

Using an organizational embeddedness perspective, this paper identifies a prior limitation of organizational demography research. Organizational demography has focused mainly on the role of numerical representation in producing minorities' work experiences and outcomes. In contrast, the embeddedness perspective of minority ties accounts for the dual roles of numerical minority status and organizational practices, uncovering their effects on the understudied properties of social ties. During the year I spent in the five high schools, three organizational practices used by principals became clear and distinguished the sites from one another: how principals hired teachers; how principals assigned teachers to classrooms; and whether principals policed teachers' informal social interactions.

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<sup>26</sup> The Online Appendix examines in detail this as well as three other alternate explanations for the tie patterns and resource disparities: critical mass differences; workplace-level resource differences; and the lack of variance of organizational practices within racial composition settings. Negative cases within the data suggest that these explanations play a minor role in explaining tie patterns and resource disparities. The appendix also contains a listing of all ties observed and reported, upon which Table 2 is based.

The organizational practices emerging from this analysis are also well-established in prior research: race-based discrimination in the hiring of black teachers (D'Amico et al. 2017), as well as school staffing practices resulting in black teacher isolates or “loners” (Bristol and Shirrell 2018); clustering of same-race employees in separate physical spaces (Meyers and Vallas 2016); and different organizational norms for blacks versus whites for expressing emotions in majority-white workplaces (Wingfield 2010). Theoretically, these practices are expected to operate in both majority-black and majority-white organizations (e.g., see Hodson 2001). Although the findings should be interpreted with caution, given the small number of research sites and that racial composition and organizational practices varied together in these sites, results reported here are consistent with and bridge work on how organizations generate racial advantage and disadvantage through their practices (e.g., Lewis and Diamond 2015), affecting whites and blacks in the minority differently (e.g., Lewis-McCoy 2014; Morris 2006).

I found that teachers' tie properties of speed, cliquishness, multiplexity, and expansiveness differed for white and black teachers who were each in the minority in their schools. These properties were largely shaped by principals' organizational practices. White teachers in the numerical minority, unlike black teachers in the numerical minority, felt free to form ties in same-race groups. In addition, whites' ties with one another formed quickly regardless of whether they were in the majority or minority in their schools. Cross-occupational ties with in-group members were common among black teachers in majority-white contexts, but they were not common for whites in majority-black contexts. The qualitative differences in tie properties were the intervening mechanism that facilitated resource access for the two groups.

By investigating the organizational practices of hiring, classroom assignment, and policing across different work organizations, this paper helps us understand how coworker relationships are embedded within particular organizational contexts that expand or contract

opportunities for interaction. In turn, coworker interaction is vital to processes that impact worker performance, commitment, and well-being, such as: sharing information (Castilla 2005; Fernandez et al. 2000), enhancing voice (Hirschman 1970), and emotion management (Lively 2000; Wingfield 2010). Differences in these kinds of coworker social support processes were observed across different racial groups in the minority. The results show that antecedents of coworker interaction are a vital component to producing or mitigating within-workplace inequality. And, while the antecedent organizational practices are not conceived of as endemic to or systematically tied to a certain racial composition, the practices appear to be a large part of what “starts” the composition effects under the conditions found in the research sites.

The relationship between organizational practices, tie properties, and resource outcomes for both white and black numeric minority groups is represented in Figure 2. A summary of how these groups compare to organizational majorities appears in Figure 3. This study contributes to research on demographic minority experiences in the workplace, as well as the organizational embeddedness approach to social network analysis. The findings have practical implications and inform future research.

*----INSERT FIGURES 2 AND 3 ABOUT HERE ----*

### **Organizational Demography**

This study makes three contributions to research on demographic minority groups in the workplace. First, by comparing different racial groups when they are in the numerical majority and the minority, this study develops new dimensions of the concept of a minority. Based on their representation in both society and the workplace, an individual can be a non-minority, a single-level minority, or a double-level minority. These categories connect to the two theoretical levels of racism, structural and interpersonal (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009). A non-minority faces neither type of racism; single-level minorities face only or mainly one (e.g., white

numerical minorities may encounter interpersonal racism in the workplace; black majorities at work still face structural racism in society); double-level minorities face both. Using these dimensions, future research in organizational demography can better account for the relative roles of the organizational versus extra-organizational (i.e., status-based) sources of group disadvantage and racism in their studies of minority experiences and outcomes. For example, organizational practices of classroom placement and policing capture internal practices, while hiring practices partly reflect opportunity structures and legal mandates beyond the organization. The findings show that double-level minorities are affected by both: even when the court mandate to increase black hires ended, black teachers' incorporation into the schools had not been achieved; rather, internal practices ensured that referrals that could generate bonding did not happen. That fulfillment of the mandate did not bring about equitable hiring strategies for black and white teachers suggests detrimental implementation of the desegregation mandate, but also illustrates the importance of internal practices beyond the reach of a court order in generating racial disparities for double-level minorities.

Second, these findings build on prior research showing the importance of a minority's demographic match with his/her supervisor in generating or avoiding minority disadvantage (Ely 1994) via status processes (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980; Correll and Ridgeway 2003). Consistent with work that finds this match affects white and black teachers incongruently (Grissom and Keiser 2011), I found that demographic mismatch for white minorities with their black supervisors had no negative impact on their relationships with their co-minority colleagues. In fact, a significant source of advantage for white minorities could be seen in instances where black administrators afforded white minorities opportunities for actions that enhanced white minorities' influence. The combining principle of status characteristics theory would predict that, given their higher specific status characteristic of their authority position,

black administrators would have a slight status advantage over white employees who are lower on that specific status characteristic. My findings suggest that in this situation, black administrators chose to incorporate socially the white minorities in their own schools – perhaps owing to empathizing with the minority position, or simply as a means to build their own cross-race coalition of support. The findings show that the implication of these status processes goes a step further beyond supervisor-subordinate dynamics, also shaping the networks of coworkers’ own in-groups.

The influence of a demographic match between black minorities and their supervisors had a less straightforward role. While some principal-teacher relationships between black minority teachers and black assistant principals helped the minority teachers recover some resource access through upward cross-occupational ties, black assistant principals also actively supported white principals’ policing strategies, which blunted black minority teachers’ resource access from one another. While the former finding is consistent with Grissom and Keiser’s (2011) work, the latter uncovers obstacles black minorities still face as they navigate white-dominated spaces, even with a “supervisor like me” in place. Indeed, the participation of dominated racial groups in institutional racism against their own group is consistent with the symbolic violence tenet of racial domination theory (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009).

Third, this study highlights the utility of social network concepts and comparative organizational ethnography to extend organizational demography theories such as token theory, which tend to take an individual-level approach to accounting for mechanisms generating inequality. What an organization-based ethnographic documenting of social networks affords is more complete data upon which to build theory. By supplementing interviews with observations, I found considerable underreporting of consequential workplace relationships in the interviews. The ethnographic method used here improves our understanding of how situated relationality



produces inequitable demographic outcomes (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019), compared to extant studies which are largely based on interview data abstracted from individuals across a large number of organizations (e.g., Lorber 1984; Williams 1992; Turco 2010; Wingfield 2010). And, joining a few studies that compare different minority groups (Flores 2017; Turco 2010), the present study does so by comparing multiple organizational sites.

### **Social Networks Analysis**

This study makes three major contributions to networks research. First, the finding that black minority teachers were almost always “lonely onlies” in their departments, and the associated negative resource outcomes, suggests an important boundary condition to Burt’s (1997) argument that minorities benefit from structural holes. The difference could be due to occupational distinctiveness, by which jobs in manufacturing (which Burt studied) reward competition while teaching jobs reward teamwork. Brokerage benefits for demographic minorities may hold only in jobs that require neither knowledge sharing for optimal performance nor dense in-group ties to mobilize resources.

Second, whereas prior work has modeled friendship formation as a function of individual and organizational demographics, such work has not been able to explain why blacks and whites in the minority form their in-group networks differently (e.g., Goodreau et al. 2009). The present study locates one potential process driving these differences: distinctive organizational practices affecting numerical minority groups. The finding that black minorities were not allowed to be in groups points to a more general organizing principle in organizations, whereby lower-powered status groups (e.g., black minorities) face obstacles to upward mobility because higher-status groups (e.g., white majorities) display discomfort with racial minorities uniting into groups. While the results in the present study can only speculate as to what drives such intergroup relations, the finding of white resistance to racial minority group organizing is consistent with

Warikoo's (2016) findings in majority-white college settings and Walker's (2018) findings in archival research on black educators' associations. The finding also links ideas from social psychology to extend networks research, and vice versa. Naomi Ellemers' (1993) work proposes that individual versus group mobility strategies emerge depending on organizational minorities' perceived relative deprivation and permeable boundaries to attaining a better position. Consistent with these concepts, the findings in the present study show how whites minorities' cliques were able to advance their entire in-group by protecting its interests, while black double-level minorities used individual mobility strategies, as group strategies were off-limits within their institution's norms.

In this vein, this study extends our understanding of how race relations within a school intertwine with race relations out-of-school (Granovetter 1986), shaping the networks of its various members, as well as teachers' collaborative behaviors. Lewis-McCoy's (2014) ethnography of parents' networking strategies in a majority-white elementary school shows how mobility-minded black middle class parents were excluded from white parents' affinity networks in their neighborhood and school, leading them to rely, with some success, on formal networking strategies. Concerning the association of teacher race with teachers' reported collaborative behaviors around teaching and learning (Ronfeldt et al. 2015), the present study provides insight into the organizational conditions under which teachers' workplace experiences may differ, shining light on in-group dynamics and the role of teachers' perception versus objective observation. Moreover, while research in education on teacher collaboration focuses heavily on the sharing of "professional" resources (e.g., sharing strategies for teaching, planning student assessments, or choosing curriculum), the present study shows that professional matters are only part of what teachers interact over.

Third, an empirical question emerging from these findings pertains to how the organizational and social network dynamics found here may arise in many kinds of segregated workplace settings, especially those tied to residential segregation and job quality. For instance, grocery stores, hospitals, and churches often have racial compositions of staff (as well as who is served there) that feature racial numerical minorities. Because empirical evidence of Kanter's proposed threshold effects hold for gender (specifically female minorities) but not other characteristics such as race (Yoder 1991), it would be reasonable to expect that societal racial minorities will experience discrimination in these firms whether they are in the minority or majority, though the nature of the discrimination may differ. For instance, Giuliano, Levine, and David (2009, 2011) show that in U.S. retail firms, white managers hire fewer black employees, and nonwhite managers give preferential treatment to white employees in the firm. If manager race is most often congruent with the racial composition of staff overall, my findings appear consistent with the idea that racially segregated workplaces will produce different dynamics for white and black minorities within them. In addition, "bad jobs" with low wages, little flexibility, and low control over work activities (Kalleberg 2011), such as retail work, often feature greater representation of societal minorities, wherein they experience greater regulation by managers (e.g., of their feelings and appearance) than their white counterparts (Misra and Walters 2018).

### **Practical Implications**

These findings should concern scholars and practitioners interested in school improvement, in terms of the impact of the social context of the school on student performance. Research in the economics of education about principal management quality finds that two dimensions of management quality – supporting instruction and overseeing the functioning of the school – significantly predict higher student achievement and school accountability ratings (Bloom et al. 2015; Grissom and Loeb 2011, respectively). The present study additionally shows

how social aspects of management impact minority teachers' ability to gather professional and political resources, which in turn likely impinge on teachers' ability to execute quality instruction (Ferguson and Hirsch 2014). Thus, two practical implications of the findings here pertain to improving principal evaluation and training systems. First, evaluation systems should incorporate social dimensions of management, holding school leaders accountable for evidence of active discrimination in the form of using referral networks unevenly; relying on implicit sorting to arrange workers across space; and/or selectively controlling some workers' informal networks. Second, with such responsibility mechanisms in place, district efforts to improve equitable leadership practices through diversity training, formal networking, and mentoring could also be effective (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The findings in this study pose further questions about generalizability of the dynamics observed; critical mass and intergroup relations; and brokerage in minority groups.

It is possible that some part of the racial dynamics observed here were particular to these five schools. Future studies should examine how organizations with exactly equivalent racial compositions, as well as with additional or other racial groups, compare to the sites studied here. The limitation of imbalance and a two-race system is imposed in part by the particular setting of the study, the American South, which brings unique demographic factors into play, including relatively high income inequality and a dense black population. These factors influence the distribution of teachers' demographics across different school settings, and also likely impact the generalizability of these findings to other regions in the U.S. Also, a closer control of organizational conditions (such as sampling all sites within one school district) across sites in a comparative research design is prevented by the ways in which teacher race is distributed across urban and suburban districts; this tendency is hard to escape, no matter the region.

Along these lines, a future study could use a large sample of schools to examine whether and how racial composition and organizational practices are systematically related. Future qualitative studies exploring demographic and organizational influences on network processes should also examine conditions not captured here. The sites selected in this study represent two of four hypothetically possible combinations: i.e., majority-black workplaces with accommodating organizational practices for numerical minorities, and majority-white workplaces with restrictive organizational practices for numerical minorities. While individual cases of switchers and negative cases provide some suggestive evidence for what we might expect to see in the majority-black/restrictive and majority-white/accommodating “cells” of conditions, the data available in this study cannot make definitive conclusions about disentangling the relative contributions of each antecedent factor (demographic composition or organizational practices).

Future work should also examine under what conditions, and in what ways, brokers in a subordinate minority group (such as black principals or assistant principals) are willing to use their position to help their in-group members who are in lower authority positions. The findings in this study suggest that if the supervisor belongs to a marginalized identity group, he/she may not help in-group members in ways that buffer organizational practices. Brokers may in fact create such practices through the way they engage with their in-group. Such further study would provide important status-related clarifications about the network aspects of organizational demography theory that are advanced in this paper.

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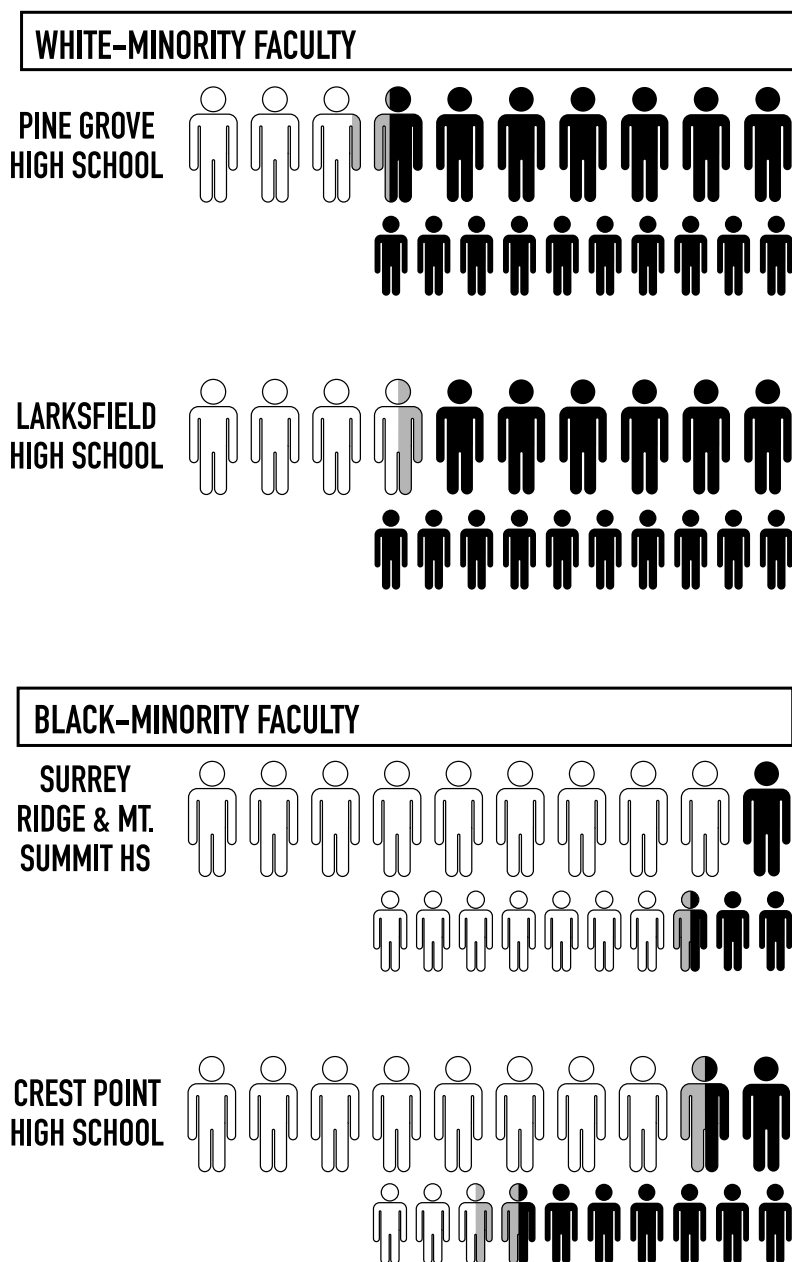


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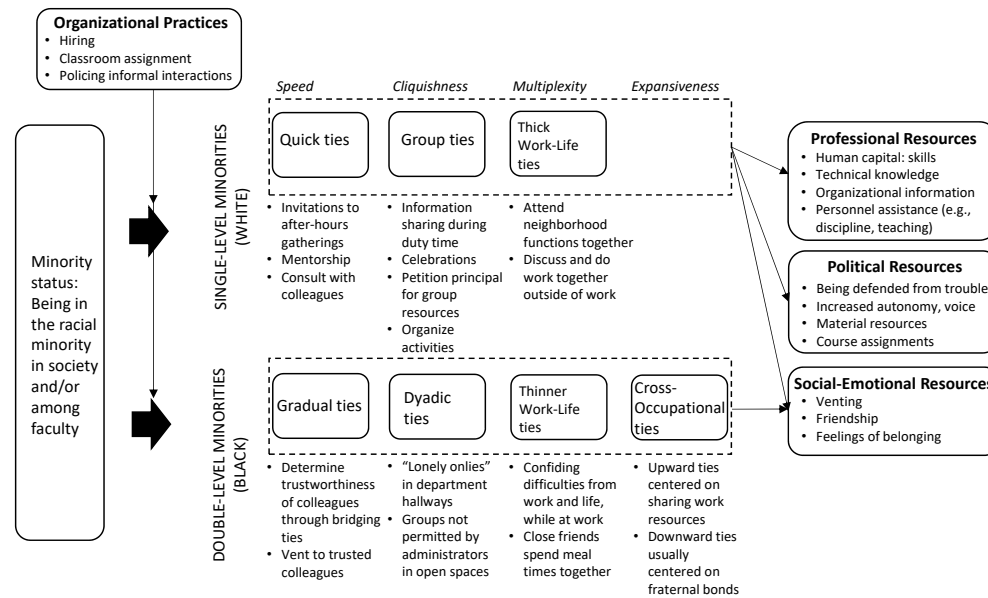
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**Figure 1. Racial Demographics of Research Sites**

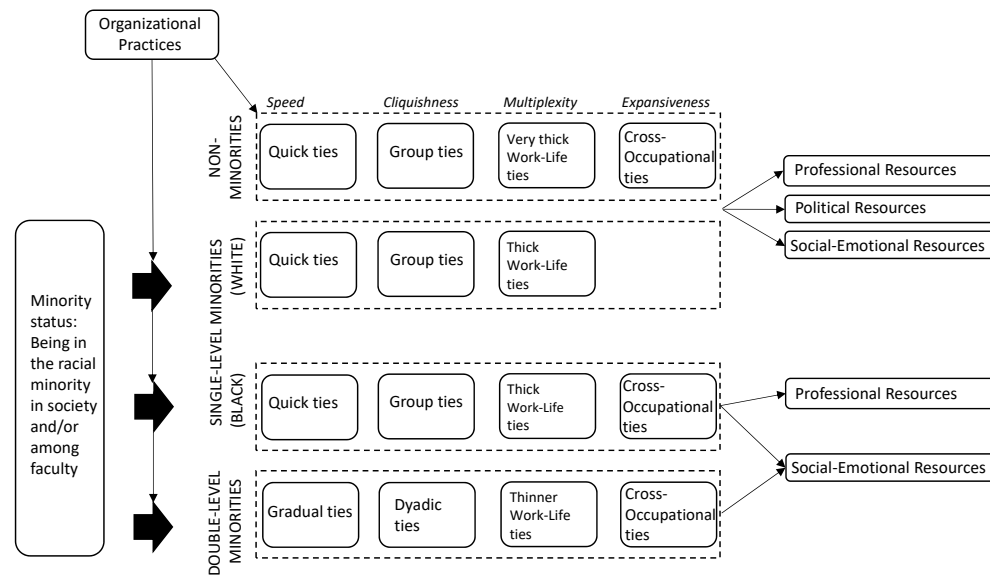


Racial demographics of research sites. White and black figures represent white and black racial backgrounds, respectively. Gray figures represent Asian, Hispanic, or Native American racial backgrounds. This graphic depicts approximate percentages. Large figures represent teachers; small figures represent students.

**Figure 2. A Pathway Model Connecting Organizational Practices, Tie Properties, and Resource Outcomes**



**Figure 3. Tie Properties and Resource Access, Compared Across All Groups**



**Table 1. Description of Composition and Structural Conditions of Research Sites**

School Pseudonym	Faculty composition	Faculty size	Structural supports to interaction	Structural constraints to interaction
Pine Grove High School	majority-black (68% black)	91	Smaller school square footage Proximate clusters of black teachers Departments semi-clustered Faculty meetings lengthy	High turnover Scarce physical resources Few proximate clusters of white teachers
Larksfield High School	majority-black (60% black)	97	Smaller school square footage Proximate clusters of black teachers Proximate clusters of white teachers Departments semi-clustered Faculty meetings frequent	High turnover Scarce physical resources
Crest Point High School	majority-white (15% black)	67	More student-free time during workday Abundant physical resources Proximate clusters of white teachers Proximate clusters of black staff Departments clustered	High turnover Large school square footage No proximate clusters of black teachers Faculty meetings rare
Surrey Ridge High School	majority-white (10% black)	97	Low turnover More student-free time during workday Abundant physical resources Proximate clusters of white teachers Proximate clusters of black staff Departments semi-clustered	Large school square footage No proximate clusters of black teachers Faculty meetings rare
Mt. Summit High School	majority-white (10% black)	39	Low turnover More student-free time during workday Abundant physical resources Departments clustered	Large school square footage No proximate clusters of black teachers No proximate clusters of black staff Faculty meetings short

**Table 2. Types of Resources that Minorities Accessed through their Social Ties**

	NON-MINORITY		SINGLE-LEVEL MINORITIES				DOUBLE-LEVEL MINORITIES	
	<u>Whites in the Majority</u>		<u>Whites in the Minority</u>		<u>Blacks in the Majority</u>		<u>Blacks in the Minority</u>	
	Same-race (n=38)	Cross-race (n=38)	Same-race (n=21)	Cross-race (n=21)	Same-race (n=21)	Cross-race (n=21)	Same-race (n=14)	Cross-race (n=14)
<i>Professional resources</i>								
Number of ties*	32	6	18	16	16	10	5	12
Percent of ties with resource access	84%	16%	86%	76%	76%	48%	36%	86%
<i>Political resources</i>								
Number of ties	19	2	15	12	8	5	5	10
Percent of ties with resource access	50%	5%	71%	57%	38%	24%	36%	71%
<i>Emotional resources</i>								
Number of ties	28	9	17	15	18	13	13	9
Percent of ties with resource access	74%	24%	81%	71%	86%	62%	93%	64%
<hr/>								
<i>OTHER RESOURCES</i>								
<i>Cultural Resources ("Acquiring Fit")</i>								
Number of ties	n/a	2	n/a	9	n/a	0	n/a	1
Percent of ties with resource access		5%		43%		0%		7%
<i>Social Protection ("Avoiding Sabotage")</i>								
Number of ties	n/a	1	n/a	1	n/a	1	n/a	5
Percent of ties with resource access		3%		5%		5%		36%

Note: The researcher observed additional ties in the fieldwork beyond the participants who were formally interviewed and shadowed, except for double-level minorities in their same-race exchanges and cross-race political resource exchanges. These additional observations made negligible changes to these overall patterns, except black single-level minorities' same-race political exchanges (four additional observed ties brought the adjusted proportional percent to 48%) and cross-race political exchanges (four additional observed ties brought the adjusted proportional percent to 36%)

\*Numbers represent individuals accessing resource from at least one tie in that category.